

Alberta Water Futures Challenges and opportunities for Alberta's Water Management System Terms of Reference

Approved by the Alberta Water Council (AWC) on November 2020.

CONTEXT

The Alberta Water Council (AWC) approved formation of an *ad hoc* discussion and subsequent working group to explore potential future challenges and opportunities facing Alberta's water management system. The project team will operate in a manner that is consistent with the rules, policies and procedures adopted by the Alberta Water Council, including the use of consensus to make decisions in a multi-stakeholder process.

STRATEGIC INTENT (GOAL)

The purpose of the **Alberta Water Futures Project** is to identify the top future risks that may affect Alberta's water management system¹ and then assess the readiness² of the system to respond to those emerging challenges and potential opportunities.

The Project will focus on water strategy and policy aspects of the water management system, and accompanying legislative, regulatory, governance, data, and regional/watershed delivery tools.

OBJECTIVES

The Water Futures project would achieve the following three objectives:

1. **Current state assessment:** Conduct a strategic-level assessment of strengths and shortcomings of the current water management system
2. **Identify top risks³:** Describe a select few top social, environmental, and economic risks to Alberta's water management future in the short and long term (10-year horizon) that may prevent the water management system from responding appropriately
3. **Cross-sector perspectives:** Characterize cross-sector perspectives on the readiness of the water management system to adapt or respond to the identified top risks

¹ The working group noted that the 'water management system' is comprised of many elements. The scope of this project was intentionally focused on water strategy and policy, and the specific supporting tools of legislation, regulation, governance, data, and regional/watershed delivery.

² Readiness is broadly described by the working group as the system's ability to be resilient, adaptable, inclusive, and collaborative.

³ The identification of potential responses to top risks is out-of-scope for the Alberta Water Futures project.

KEY TASKS

1. Current state assessment

- Conduct a strategic-level SWOT analysis of the existing system and describe key findings with rationale

2. Identify select top risks

- Gather feedback and input from sectors and select experts, maximizing cross-sector collaboration where possible, to create a listing of potential social, environmental, and economic risks
- Synthesize input and prioritize the list of risks to identify the top risks overall
- Describe these top risks with their rationale for selection

3. Cross-sector perspectives

- Maximizing cross-sector collaboration where possible, collect input and feedback from sectors regarding the readiness of the water management system to adapt or respond to each top risk
- Characterize system readiness, identifying differences or similarities across sectors
- Describe, if possible, opportunities for collaboration to improve readiness across AWC sectors

4. Reporting

- Assemble the draft report progressively through the project and present to AWC for feedback
- Incorporate feedback and present the final multi-sector report to AWC.

TIMELINES and DELIVERABLES

The project team will provide the following deliverables to the AWC:

- *Approval of the Alberta Water Futures Project terms of reference*.....*Nov 2020*
Transition of existing working group into project team
- *Current State Assessment*.....*Nov 2020 – Dec 2020*
Planning and delivery
- *Email update to Council*.....*Dec 2020*
Project update and results to date presented electronically
- *Identify Select Top Risks*.....*Nov 2020 – Jan 2021*
Engage sectors, synthesize feedback, identify risks
- *Email update to Council*.....*Jan 2021*
Project update and results to date presented electronically
- *Cross-sector perspectives*.....*Jan 2021 – Mar 2021*
Engage sectors, synthesize feedback, describe system readiness
- *Update to Council*.....*Feb 2021*
Project update and results to date presented at the AWC Board meeting

- **Final Report**.....**Mar 2021**
Final report, incorporating comments or changes coming from an AWC Board discussion of the draft assessment report.

MEMBERSHIP

The Project Team is expected to encompass membership from the Industry, Non-Government Organizations, other Governments, and the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities. The Working Group membership is expected to transition into the project team membership, allowing for additional members to join if interested.

BUDGET

The working group anticipates that the Alberta Water Futures project can be completed using an estimated \$18,000 of Alberta Water Council core funds identified to support project teamwork. No additional project-specific funding is required at this time.

Type	Amount
Stakeholder support	\$ 8,000
Hosting (i.e., meetings and workshop support)	\$ 2,000
Communications (design, layout, printing)	\$ 8,000
Total	\$ 18,000